

BLOOMFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Bloomfield, Connecticut

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

No. 5145.53(a)

**RE: Transgender Students or Gender Non-Conforming Students
Students**

Approved: June 12, 2018

Accommodating transgender students or gender non-conforming students

This administrative regulation's accommodation and support guidelines advance the district's goals of (1) providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment, and (2) implementing risk management controls in a developing and unsettled area of the law in which the federal office of civil rights and department of justice have issued guidance.

While there is no mandate requiring administrative regulations for accommodating transgender students or gender non-conforming students, this administrative regulation guides school officials through the: (1) application of state and federal anti-discrimination laws to this student population, and (2) common needs in which transgender or gender non-conforming students may request accommodations and support at school. This administrative regulation applies to all school activities, school-provided transportation, and school-sponsored events regardless of where they occur.

The building principal, nondiscrimination coordinator, and/or complaint manager, with input from others as appropriate, will implement this administrative regulation. They will work with each transgender or gender non-conforming student, and as appropriate with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), to manage a student's accommodations and supports on a case-by-case basis. The board attorney will be consulted concerning legal compliance.

Additional direction can be acquired from the Connecticut state department of education publication "guidance on civil rights protections and supports for transgender students."

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Gender-based discrimination is prohibited

School districts must provide equal educational opportunities to transgender students and gender nonconforming students. Under state law, sex discrimination extends to claims of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

Federal law prohibits exclusion and discrimination on the basis of sex. 20 U.S. §1681(a), Title IX of the education amendments of 1972. According to the U.S. Department of Education's office for civil rights (OCR) and the U.S. Department of Justice, Title IX protects lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, from gender discrimination.

This administrative regulation's guidance on accommodating transgender students or gender nonconforming students is based on OCR pronouncements.

Gender-based bullying and/or harassment is prohibited

The laws prohibiting gender discrimination require the district to protect transgender students and gender non-conforming students from bullying and harassment by other students.

According to the Federal Office of Civil Rights, a school district is responsible for damages suffered by a student who was the victim of protected-class harassment: (1) that is severe, pervasive, or persistent; (2) about which school officials knew or should have known; and (3) that interferes with or limits a student's participation in or benefit from services, activities, or opportunities offered by the school.

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Gender-based bullying and/or harassment is prohibited (continued)

State statute 10-15c, as amended, prohibits bullying on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, and/or association with a person or group with one of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics. The board policy on bullying and its safe school climate plan must be used to address and resolve peer bullying and harassment of transgender or gender non-conforming students. (see policy #5131.911)

Terminology and definitions

The district uses the following terms and definitions when discussing accommodations for a transgender student or gender non-conforming student. Note: definitions are not intended to label students, but rather to assist with understanding.

Gender-based discrimination is a form of sex discrimination, and refers to differential treatment or harassment of a student based on the student's sex, including gender identity, gender expression, and non-conformity with gender stereotypes, that results in the denial or limitation of education services, benefits, or opportunities. Conduct may constitute gender-based discrimination regardless of the actual or perceived sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation of the persons experiencing or engaging in the conduct.

Sex assigned at birth and assigned sex refers to the gender designation recorded on an individual's birth certificate at birth based on biological characteristics.

Gender expression refers to the manner a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through external cues that one uses to represent or communicate one's gender to others, such as behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, mannerisms, or body characteristics.

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Terminology and definitions (continued)

Gender identity refers to one's internal sense of gender, which may be different from one's assigned sex, and which is consistently and uniformly asserted, or for which there is other evidence that the gender identity is sincerely held as part of the student's core identity.

Transgender describes an individual whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from the individual's assigned sex at birth. Transgender boy and transgender male refer to an individual assigned the female sex at birth who has a male gender identity. An individual can express or assert a transgender gender identity in a variety of ways, which may but do not always include specific medical treatments or administrative regulations. Medical treatments or administrative regulations are not considered a prerequisite for one's recognition as transgender.

For purposes of this administrative regulation, a transgender student is a student who consistently and uniformly asserts a gender identity different from the student's assigned sex, or for whom there is documented legal or medical evidence that the gender identity is sincerely held as part of the student's core identity.

Gender transition refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the gender that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. It is the experience by which a transgender person goes from living and identifying as one's assigned sex to living and identifying as the sex consistent with one's gender identity. A gender transition often includes a social transition, during which an individual begins to live and identify as the sex consistent with the individual's gender identity, with or without certain medical treatments or administrative regulations.

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Terminology and definitions (continued)

Gender stereotypes refers to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity, including expectations of how boys or girls represent or communicate one's gender to others, such as behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice, mannerisms, or body characteristics.

Gender non-conformity refers to one's gender expression, gender characteristics, or gender identity that does not conform to gender stereotypes.

Facilities refers to facilities and accommodations used by students at school or during school-sponsored activities and trips, and include, but are not limited to, restrooms, locker rooms, and overnight facilities.

Relevant board policies for accommodations, supports, and inclusion of transgender or gender non-conforming students

- 5145.6, uniform grievance administrative regulation, contains the process for an individual to seek resolution of a complaint. A student may use this policy to complain about bullying. The district complaint manager shall address the complaint promptly and equitably.
- 6121.1 & 0521, equal educational opportunities, requires that equal educational and extracurricular opportunities be available to all students without regard to, among other protected statuses, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- 5145.4, 5145.5, 5145.52, harassment of students prohibited, prohibits any person from harassing, intimidating, or bullying a student based on an actual or perceived characteristic that is identified in the policy including, among other protected statuses, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

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Relevant Board Policies for Accommodations, Supports, and Inclusion of Transgender or Gender Non-Conforming Students (continued)

- 5132, student appearance, prohibits students from dressing or grooming in such a way as to disrupt the educational process, interfere with a positive teaching/learning climate, or compromise reasonable standards of health, safety, and decency.
- 5131.911, prevention of and response to bullying, intimidation, and harassment, contains the comprehensive structure for the district's bullying prevention program.
- 5145, student use of buildings - equal access, grants student-initiated groups or clubs the free use of school premises for their meetings, under specified conditions.
- 5125, student records, contains the comprehensive structure for managing school student records, keeping them confidential, and providing access as allowed or required.

Common needs for transgender or gender non-conforming students; accommodations and supports

The goal of an accommodation is to allow a transgender or gender non-conforming student to equally participate in educational and extracurricular opportunities. The right of transgender students to accommodations is generally found in legislation such as Title IX but has not been fully interpreted by the courts. Determining appropriate accommodations is difficult because school officials must balance the rights of transgender or gender non-conforming students to freedom from discrimination and freedom of expression with the rights of other students to freedoms of religion and expression. The board attorney is an indispensable member of the team that will identify accommodations for a specific student.

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Common Needs for Transgender or Gender Non-Conforming Students; Accommodations and Supports (continued)

This list is not exhaustive, and each student's request must be managed on a case-by-case basis. A particular student may not be interested in an accommodation for each item listed. Seek the board attorney's advice concerning the scope and extent of accommodations.

1. Gender transition
2. Names and pronouns
3. School student records
4. Student privacy and confidentiality
5. Access to gender-segregated areas (e.g. Locker rooms and restrooms)
6. Sports and physical education classes - participation in competitive athletic activities and contact sports is resolved pursuant to CAGE policy #5145.53
7. Dress codes
8. Gender segregation in other areas (e.g., class discussions and field trips)

Training for school staff members

When and where appropriate, professional development for staff members should include opportunities to gain a better understanding of equal educational opportunity laws, gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity; the development of gender identity in children and adolescents; developmentally appropriate strategies for communicating with students and parents/guardians about issues related to gender identity; gender-affirming approaches to ensuring the safety and support of transgender students and gender non-conforming students; developmentally appropriate strategies for preventing and intervening in bullying incidents; and board policies regarding bullying, discrimination, and student privacy.

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CIAC Rules of Eligibility for Transgender Participation (From CIAC Handbook)

“The CIAC is committed to providing transgender student-athletes with equal opportunities to participate in CIAC athletic programs consistent with their gender identity. Hence, this policy addresses eligibility determinations for students who have a gender identity that is different from the gender listed on their official birth certificates. The CIAC has concluded that it would be fundamentally unjust and contrary to applicable state and federal law to preclude a student from participation on a gender specific sports team that is consistent with the public gender identity of that student for all other purposes. Therefore, for purposes of sports participation, the CIAC shall defer to the determination of the student and his or her local school regarding gender identification. In this regard, the school district shall determine a student’s eligibility to participate in a CIAC gender specific sports team based on the gender identification of that student in current school records and daily life activities in the school and community at the time that sports eligibility is determined for a particular season. Accordingly, when a school district submits a roster to the CIAC, it is verifying that it has determined that the students listed on a gender specific sports team are entitled to participate on that team due to their gender identity and that the school district has determined that the expression of the student’s gender identity is bona fide and not for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage in competitive athletics.

Students who wish to participate on a CIAC gender specific sports team that is different from the gender identity listed on the student’s current school records are advised to address the gender identification issue with the local school district well in advance of the deadline for athletic eligibility determinations for a current sports season. Students should not be permitted to participate in practices or to try out for gender specific sports teams that are different from their publicly identified gender identity at that time or to try out simultaneously for CIAC sports teams of both genders.

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CIAC rules of eligibility for transgender participation (from CIAC handbook) (continued)

Nothing in this policy shall be read to entitle a student to selection to any particular team or to permit a student to transfer from one gender specific team to a team of a different gender during a sports season. In addition, the CIAC shall expect that, as a general matter, after the issue of gender identity has been addressed by the student and the school district, the determination shall remain consistent for the remainder of the student's high school sports eligibility. The CIAC has concluded that this criterion is sufficient to preclude the likelihood that a student will claim a particular gender identity for the purpose of gaining a perceived advantage in athletic competition.